

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Mark Kuzma
Councilmember Chelsee Howell
Councilmember Debra Musgrove
Councilmember Michael Olson
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Dan Specht
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
City Attorney Fritz Knaak
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
IT Manager Jason Fredrickson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kuzma called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Detachment/Annexation Request Discussion for 15861 Jarvis St NW

Community Development Director Hanson reviewed the Staff report in regard to the detachment and annexation request for Northstar Truck & RV Parking LLC at 15861 Jarvis Street NW. She shared that the applicant is present this evening to answer any questions the Council may have.

Councilmember Specht asked if this request is to give up some of the City's land which would also mean that they would not be receiving property taxes on this property.

Community Development Director Hanson said yes.

Councilmember Specht said he would never support this.

Councilmember Howell asked if this property was annexed to Elk River, would the current use for their property be allowed in Elk River.

Community Development Director Hanson said yes.

Councilmember Howell asked why the City would not just allow this use. She said she is not in support of annexing this land.

Community Development Director Hanson shared that there have been some code enforcement issues in the past on this property where the land has not been utilized properly. She stated that Northstar still operates their business on the Elk River side of their property through a Conditional Use Permit. She added that Elk River said if this annexation does not go through then the business owner will have to build a berm to block the Ramsey parcel for screening purposes.

Councilmember Howell asked for the reasoning behind the need for a berm.

Community Development Director Hanson said it has to do with Ramsey's zoning on the property.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that it would make more sense to annex the portion of the land that is in Elk River and give it to Ramsey, then the City can work with the business owner on the zoning for the property. She asked why they wanted to annex to Elk River rather than Ramsey.

Community Development Director Hanson said it is due to the City's zoning and the Comprehensive Plan not aligning with this use.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the zoning of this property has changed since Northstar purchased it.

Community Development Director Hanson said no. She noted that the last zoning code amendments did not address this area.

Councilmember Specht asked if there is any land that Elk River would be willing to swap for this property.

Councilmember Riley said he would like to hear from the applicant as he is not understanding why they would rather be annexed to Elk River than come forward for a zoning amendment.

Councilmember Olson said he does not see a benefit to the City in this situation.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he agrees with Councilmember Riley as the City has tools in place to allow for this type of use. He asked what zoning district this area would have to be in to allow the current use.

Community Development Director Hanson said it would have to be in the I-3 district.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that this property is in a tough spot. He said he is not opposed to letting this property go; however, it also makes more sense to him for the land in Elk River to be annexed to Ramsey. He asked about the timing of an annexation if it were to go through. He noted that there is an assessment on this property that goes through 2024 in Ramsey, and he would want to make sure that this special assessment is paid as a part of any sort of transaction.

The applicant came forward and shared that before purchasing the property he came to both Ramsey and Elk River and had asked what lot in these areas would allow him to run his business. He said a gentleman had shown him the property which he currently owns which was not up for sale at the time; however, he spoke to the property owner who was willing to sell it to him. He stated he started the business and after a few months, he found out he was not able to run his business on the Ramsey side, which is when they started the annexation process. He added that City Planner Chris Anderson is the person who suggested this annexation in the first place.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there was a reason that they preferred Elk River over Ramsey or if the reverse would be acceptable if they changed the zoning in this area to allow the business.

The applicant stated that Ramsey has a lot of restrictions and does not allow the business to be run. He explained that he would have to put asphalt or concrete throughout the entire property. He added that he also spoke with Elk River and because the only entrance and exit to the property is on the Elk River side, that is why having the whole property in Elk River was suggested.

Councilmember Woestehoff said if they were to annex the Elk River portion to Ramsey then the entrance and exit to the property would be on Jarvis in Ramsey, so this is a non-exclusive point.

The applicant added that Ramsey also did not want him to have outdoor storage on this property and the City wanted him to have a building on the property.

Community Development Director Hanson explained that the zoning code in Ramsey does require there to be a principal structure on the property and it could not just be used as a trucking terminal. She added that the building also needs to be a certain size to allow for a trucking terminal on the property. She noted that the code also requires paved or concrete surfaces for parking.

Councilmember Howell said she would rather work with the applicant on this use than lose the land to Elk River.

The applicant added that the previous property owner also used this land for outdoor storage and his use was not as structured and clean as he keeps the property.

Councilmember Specht agreed that he would be happy to work with the property owner to see what compromises they can make to retain this land in the City. He said he would never just give this land to Elk River unless they were offering the City land in return.

Mayor Kuzma noted that even if they change the zoning for this property, he is not sure if they would allow the surface to not be paved.

Councilmember Specht said they would have to have these discussions as a Council to work out the details.

Councilmember Musgrove said they will have to look at the City requirements and see what they would have to change to allow this business. She noted that with home occupation permits there is a template that they give people permission to have a home-based business with certain criteria

and if the business sells this land then things can change. She explained that if the land is all in one city or the other it makes it better for the access point and better for a business proposition to the owners as well if they were to sell this property down the line. She said she would like to work with the property owner on a compromise rather than giving the land to Elk River.

Councilmember Howell said it would be nice to annex the Elk River portion to Ramsey.

The applicant asked if they are going to allow him to run his outdoor storage business on the Ramsey portion.

Mayor Kuzma said they will have to work through this with Staff to see what they can accommodate.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that they need to fully understand what the requirement for this land is. He reiterated that there are tools that they can use to zone the property to allow the use. He said that the Council and Staff need to know what all this business will require on the land, so they can work through this.

The applicant shared that he spoke with Planning Manager Todd Larson on this, and he said that there is no chance for them to operate this kind of business on Ramsey land which is why they are wanting to annex to Elk River.

Councilmember Woestehoff explained that there is no chance they can run the business on the land with the current zoning; however, the Council can make decisions on ways that they can change zoning or the rules to make this an allowed use.

The consensus of the Council was to direct Staff to try to work towards a compromise to keep this land in Ramsey but make it so the property owner can still operate his business on the property.

2.02: Continue Discussions Regarding Proposed Updates to the Personnel Policy

Administrative Services Director Lasher continued her review of the personnel policy updates, discussing Section 11, the Use of City Property.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that the section added to 11.2 that addresses returning voicemails within one business day does not seem to belong in this section as it is more behavioral than reliant on technology. He noted that it has always been a frustration for him that Councilmembers get voicemail boxes, but they have to call out on their personal cell phone. He noted that they all take on a liability by using their personal phone numbers. He suggested adding some language that states that personal phones may be used for City business.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed that the section added to 11.2 has more to do with behavior rather than technology.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that she is struggling to find where she could move this section so that it would stand out. She said she can work on finding another logical place to put this language.

Councilmember Specht asked how this works for people on vacation.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that when an employee is out of the office due to vacation, their voicemails should be updated to include an alternative contact person.

Mayor Kuzma stated this would not necessarily cover the Council.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that under the last section of Section 11 it states that City property should only be used for official purposes and in the capacity for which it was designed. She asked if this is related to software or the hardware device.

Councilmember Specht stated that the idea around this is that the City property will be used for City business and its intended use.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he can understand the confusion; however, this is a very common phrase for these types of policies.

Administrative Services Director Lasher continued her review of the updates to the policy. She noted that she attempted to cut as much unnecessary verbiage as possible.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if cloud infrastructure is currently being used and if it should be included in the IT systems section as a policy for the future.

IT Manager Fredrikson said they can add this.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about LinkedIn being taken off of the list of social networking sites. She asked why this was removed.

IT Manager Fredrickson explained that LinkedIn is still allowed, they just used more updated examples in their definition.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said they can keep LinkedIn on this definition.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that there is no consistency throughout this section when referring to IT as sometimes it just refers to IT and other times it refers to IT Staff or Manager. She asked about the zero exceptions portion of hardware and software acquisitions.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that the reason it says zero exceptions is to put emphasis on the fact that there will be no exceptions.

Councilmember Musgrove said the word 'no' makes more sense here and gives off the same message as 'zero.'

Councilmember Howell agreed and suggested italicizing the word to add emphasis.

Councilmember Olson stated that the word ‘zero’ stands out because it is very definite that there is no tolerance for this.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said they can add something about no tolerance for this to add clarity.

Councilmember Woestehoff suggested adding subscribing to hardware or software to the prohibited list.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about item E under data management and protection. She asked why the workstations would not be backed up.

IT Manager Fredrickson explained that they do not backup local machines as everything should be on the file server and is backed up that way.

Councilmember Specht asked if there are City tablets and phones that they issue that they do not want apps downloaded on as the section on installations and downloads only refer to PCs.

Councilmember Woestehoff said a PC is just used as an example. He asked if there is language in the policy that addresses devices getting lost or stolen.

IT Manager Fredrickson said this is addressed when they discuss City issued cell phones.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that it may also be relevant when talking about other devices as most employees have City issued laptops.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about communication with Staff when they are out on the worksite. She asked if radios are ever used or if all communication is done on cell phones.

IT Manager Fredrickson said it is different based on different departments.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how City issued cell phones are tracked and budgeted.

IT Manager Fredrickson explained that in the typical process, a manager will come to him with a need and a justification of why a certain employee needs a cell phone and if he sees this as an adequate justification then he provides the cell phone. He added that all cell phone budgeting was assigned to IT several years ago.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how approved uses are being tracked on Staff cell phones when they opt to use their own personal cell phone rather than a City issued phone.

Councilmember Woestehoff said if they are using their personal cell phone then it is not a City resource. He asked if the CAN-SPAM Act is ever addressed in the policy.

IT Manager Fredrickson said he does not believe it is.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted it may be important to add some language that explains that there are internet communication rules that they may or may not be under jurisdiction to follow.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about item C under personal use. She asked how often long distance calls are made and charged out and if it is on an honor system that people report that they made long distance calls.

Administrative Services Director Lasher asked if they have unlimited calling where it does not matter the distance.

IT Manager Fredrickson said on the cell phones they do, but desk phones do not, and they are charged for the long distance calls.

Administrative Services Director Lasher added that there are some phones that do not allow long distance calls without a code.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how often employees are making long distance calls for personal use.

IT Manager Fredrickson said this has never happened before.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said it would be easier to prohibit personal long distance calls from the City landlines.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he would love to see an option to migrate to Teams phones as opposed to the current phone system.

IT Manager Fredrickson explained that he is currently working on a project to convert over the phone lines that he can discuss more later.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that in all of her years on the Council this is the first time she has been given a tutorial on what to look for in email phishing scams. She thanked the IT Staff for this training.

Administrative Services Director Lasher moved on to discuss the use of City vehicles.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the section that states that the City will examine driving records refers to background checks.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said no and explained that they can go to the clearing house if someone has a commercial driver's license, and if they have a standard license then they can get the report from the DMV.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the 40-mile distance is a standard distance for work related training.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that the 40-mile mark defines the metro area. She said they do encourage Staff to utilize City vehicles when possible as it is cheaper than paying a mileage reimbursement.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if any of this is negotiated in union contracts.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said no. She reviewed the telecommuting/remote work policy.

Councilmember Specht asked if the ability to work remotely should be more performance based rather than hours worked per week. He noted that if they are able to hire someone remotely then it could open up their applicant pool.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said she would recommend keeping this the way it is written to not allow anyone who works less than 28 hours a week to work remotely.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there is any regulation on how many people in a department can be absent.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that they ask department heads to be able to manage this on their own, similar to how they manage vacation days.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like to make sure that there is still comradery between Staff and no animosity about certain people working from home and others having to be in office.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that everyone who works remotely has an assigned day to do so. She added that she does occasionally have to ask people to work remotely on a different day than their assigned day due to staffing needs. She said they have never had an issue with this in the past.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that in some telecommuting policies he has seen a requirement to maintain a certain distance from the office. He asked if there is any thought around adding something about this to the policy.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said they have language in the policy that states that the telecommuter must be willing and able to return to the office within 48-hours. She said they can shorten this timeline.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he does not have an issue with the 48-hour timeline. He noted that the City is a service organization and sometimes people may be needed in office on short notice. He suggested putting some geographical boundary to ensure that telecommuters are within a reasonable distance to their primary office.

Councilmember Specht said he does not see the need for a geographical boundary; however, if they do want to add this then he would like there to be some leeway on this depending on situations. He gave an example of someone wanting to work one day while they are on a vacation.

Councilmember Musgrove said she does not like the idea of allowing employees to work on vacation.

Councilmember Howell asked if this has ever been an issue with people working remotely too far from their office.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said no they have never had an issue with this.

Councilmember Howell suggested leaving this as is.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that there was great concern brought up by the Police Chief, the Public Works Director, and herself that in Section 5 the language was changed as to who could authorize overtime to be the department heads only. She noted that she received feedback that department heads want to empower their supervisors to approve this as there is no way that they could approve all overtime themselves. She asked for a reconsideration of this change. She reviewed the changes to the ESST policy.

The consensus of the Council was to direct Staff to move forward with the discussed changes to the Personnel Policy, including changing the language on who can authorize overtime back to supervisors rather than only department heads.

2.03: Set Date for EPB Candidate Interviews

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that there are currently two vacancies on the EPB that need to be filled. She requested they set a date for interviewing these candidates.

The consensus of the Council was to schedule the interviews for Thursday, June 20.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Major
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.